



MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL EFFORT SEEKS FORFEITURE OF \$250,000 IN GOLD COINS FOR TEXAS MEDICAID PROGRAM

by Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott

THE MEDICAID PROGRAM, WHICH PROVIDES health care to the indigent, costs Texas taxpayers more than \$24 billion each year. With billions of dollars at stake, it is critical that law enforcement uncover and prevent waste, fraud and abuse. That's why the Texas Attorney General's Office maintains two units that do nothing but pursue Medicaid providers that overbill or defraud the taxpayers.

The Civil Medicaid Fraud Division investigates inflated product pricing, off label marketing and manufacturers' kickbacks. Another division, the Medicaid Fraud Control Unit (MFCU) pursues nursing home personnel for physical abusing, neglecting and stealing from their patients. The Unit also investigates Medicaid providers for attempting to bill the program for products and services that were never actually delivered. MFCU officers and prosecutors work

regularly with local, state and federal law enforcement officials in an effort to reduce criminal waste, fraud and abuse in the Medicaid program.

In a recent case, the Bexar County District Attorney's Office and the MFCU prosecuted Marcellius Jhekwoaba Anunobi, president and pharmacist in charge of Advanced Doctor's Prescribed Pharmacy. Anunobi was convicted on charges of Medicaid fraud, theft and money laundering after he billed the Texas Vendor Drug Program for prescriptions that were never actually filled. In September 2010, Anunobi was sentenced to 20 years in prison and ordered to pay \$2.2 million in restitution to the Texas Medicaid program.

During the investigation, the MFCU identified assets Anunobi allegedly purchased with the unlawful proceeds

of his fraud on the taxpayers. MFCU investigators discovered that 101 gold coins were located in a Wilmington, Del. depository that belonged to Anunobi and his wife, Endaline. Based upon information provided by the Texas MFCU, the Delaware MFCU executed a search warrant and seized the coin cache.

In December 2010, a Texas MFCU investigator and a U.S. Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General agent traveled to Delaware and successfully recovered the gold coins. The coins have been identified as "numismatic" because they are collector coins minted in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Remarkably, the gold coins' estimated value may exceed \$250,000. The law enforcement team returned the coins to Texas for safekeeping by the Federal Bureau of Investigation's San

Antonio office. The MFCU has filed a civil asset forfeiture petition in district court seeking authority to sell the coins to reimburse the Texas Medicaid program.

Anunobi's prosecution and the State's seizure of a quarter million dollars worth of gold coins was the result of a joint investigation facilitated through the partnerships with the Bexar County District Attorney, Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, the Texas and Delaware Medicaid Fraud Control Units, and the FBI in San Antonio. The case's progress so far demonstrates how a cooperative and multi-jurisdictional law enforcement effort helped prevent taxpayers' hard-earned dollars from being wasted on Medicaid fraud.

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